

MINUTES
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY (ACANC)

November 8, 2017

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICER'S REMARKS. Ms. Renea Yates, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery opened the November 2017 meeting. Ms. Yates noted that present in person were Major Shannon Way, ANC Strategic Planner and Mr. Timothy Keating, Alternate Designated Federal Officer, ACANC. Ms. Yates stated for the record that the Committee operates under authority of 5 U.S.C. Appendix 2, and 41 Code of Federal Regulation 102-3.50(d), and is an Advisory Committee subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Ms. Yates explained that Arlington National Cemetery (ANC), on behalf of the Department of the Army, is the sponsor of the Committee established by the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) in compliance with 10 U.S.C. § 4723 and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2012. ANC, a Direct Reporting Unit to the Headquarters, Department of the Army, is the agency that receives the benefit of the Committee's advice and recommendations, as well as provides the DFO, who is nominated by the Executive Director and appointed by the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army. Additionally, ANC provides administrative support to the Committee.

Ms. Yates noted that the meeting was open to the public. She stated that the public was not allowed to present questions from the floor or speak to any issue under discussion by the Committee without permission of the Chairperson. She noted that any member of the public was eligible to file a written statement with the Committee in accordance with the published Federal Register notice as posted in the binder at the entrance of the meeting room. Ms. Yates also noted that the proceedings were being video-recorded, and a summarized transcript of the meeting will be prepared.

The meeting was called to order at 1300.

1. **ROLL CALL:** Ms. Yates noted a quorum for the record, with the following members in attendance:

Secretary of the Army Nominees: Mr. James Peake (Co-Chair), Mr. Gene Castagnetti, and Ms. Debra Fix.

Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission nominee: Mr. Chet Edwards (Co-Chair)

Secretary of Veterans Affairs nominee: Mr. Thomas Kelley

The following member was not present:

Secretary of the Army Nominee: Mr. Ronald Fetherson

2. **PRIOR MEETING MINUTES:** The DFO announced that the minutes from the June 8, 2017 Committee meeting were available for review in the strategic documents binders on the tables.

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3. **CHAIRMEN OPENING REMARKS:** Mr. James Peake, Co-Chair of the Advisory Committee welcomed all members noting a busy agenda and requested the first presentation.
4. **MILLENNIUM AND TOR PROJECTS:** COL Peloquin, ANC Director of Engineering provided a comprehensive update. Beginning with the Millennium project, he noted ongoing work included turf corrective actions and dead tree replacement underway, final waterline work finishing up, fallen / dead wood removal, Niche wall cap flashing to be replaced in spring 2018, and, implementing storm water runoff corrective actions with a targeted completion date by Memorial Day 2018. Addressing the Tomb of Remembrance, he briefed that groundbreaking occurred in November 2016. Ongoing construction over the last year is nearing completion, with a list of discrepancies expected to be corrected by mid-November 2017. First operational use of the TOR is expected by early 2018.
5. **ANC FAMILY MEASURES SURVEY:** Ms. Norka Rojas, Chief, ANC Interment Services updated the Committee family satisfaction measured in an on-line ANC survey conducted between May 1, 2017 and September 30, 2017. She noted that an email invitation to participate in the online survey is sent to families 30 days after the funeral event. She noted that 1,217 surveys were completed representing 73% of survey invitation emails sent to families. She mentioned that the survey could be taken by any family member that opened the survey link in the invitation email. Analysis reveals overall family satisfaction of 95% with ANC staff knowledge and professionalism tied most closely with overall satisfaction of the funeral experience. Further analysis shows that nearly 25% of respondents noted the overall experience could be improved with an improvement to directions to various locations. She briefed that efforts will be made to improve communication with families when Scheduling Services are conducted, work with Public Affairs Office to improve communication on the ANC Public Website, and to continue constant communication with our Security Guards to enhance families' experience at ANC.
6. **NATIONAL DIALOGUE / PUBLIC SURVEY:** The ANC Strategic Planner, MAJ Way provided a briefing on the current status of the public survey and a strategic analysis of the results gathered thus far. The strategy behind the survey was to invite stakeholders to join a national dialogue intended to increase public awareness that current demand for burial space at ANC coupled with current geographic footprint of the cemetery will not meet the requirements of the law to keep ANC open well in to the future. Along with the survey, ANC efforts to establish a national dialogue include targeted outreach events with MSO and VSO gatherings to provide accurate and timely information to stakeholders and the public in general about ANC.

To date, over 28,000 surveys have been completed. Analysis reveals the number of completed surveys is approximately 28 per cent of all surveys started, thus approximately 100,000 people opened / began the survey. According to survey analysts, a 28 per cent completion rate of a public survey is significant which allows reliable analysis. Survey results were categorized into four groups, or "personas" to

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analyze survey response statistics. Categories of survey takers were identified as Veterans, Service Members, Family Members, or unaffiliated with the military. Survey response analysis reveals:

- Nearly 95% of responses favored ANC remaining open for active burials until well into the future.
- Nearly 80% of responses favored expanding ANC boundaries and changing burial eligibility criteria to extend ANC service life.
- Nearly 70% of responses favored restricting burial eligibility if further geographic expansion was not possible.
- Nearly 66% of responses favored relocating military support functions such as Child Care, Commissary, and Medical facilities to allow ANC expansion.

It was noted that while over 40% of survey participants responded that they did not live near a national cemetery, there was general agreement by committee members that the public may not be fully aware of national cemeteries which are close to their domiciles, and thus, increasing public awareness about the NCA / VA cemeteries through ANC dialogue such as the public website has merit.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS: The Remember and Explore Subcommittee Chair reported that ANC efforts to continually improve the visitor experience was reflected in how ANC has leveraged technology along similar lines of the Department of Transportation's "Smart Cities" initiative. He noted remarkable progress with the efforts of the ANC Horticulture team moving forward toward Level 3 National Arboretum certification. There were no subcommittee recommendations for the full Committee to consider.

The Honor Subcommittee Chair reported significant discussion and consideration given to the ANC business practice of allowing families to reschedule Full Military Funeral Honors. Wait time for families can be as long as 8 to 10 months to receive FMFH (based on availability of service members to participate in various teams, marching band, escorts, as well as availability of caisson / horse teams). Further exacerbating wait times for families are events which necessitate rescheduling a FMFH service beyond the control of the family, such as a natural disaster, storms, or other emergencies. However, it was also noted that families can – and do – reschedule FMFH services for convenience, such as a desirable time of year. In this case, wait times for families initially requesting a FMFH service is further lengthened. Currently families are offered three dates from which to choose.

The Chair called for full committee discussion of the subcommittee reports. Members discussed at length how ANC might consider process improvement to business practices scheduling FMFH, specifically for those families that opt to defer or reschedule FMFH services for the sake of convenience. It was noted that there are no CFR or other legal entitlements which govern the practice of conducting FMFH for those interred or inurned at ANC. As of November 2017, there were 2555 ANC burial cases waiting to be scheduled for funeral honors. Of those, 224 have had an option to

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schedule but have not decided on a date. In addition, 220 families have rescheduled a service. Of these 64, or approximately 29%, are awaiting FMFH.

After discussions were completed, the Chair called for proposals for recommendations to the Secretary of the Army as a result of the days' work. Noting that the issue of conducting honor ceremonies for burials at ANC is a business practice, not an issue which requires a decision by the Secretary to change, the Committee undertook a vote whether to recommend the Executive Director, ANMC consider adopting a change in business practice policy.

The Committee agreed that families that have been offered 3 opportunities to receive FMFH and either decline those opportunities or choose to reschedule after agreeing to a scheduled date should be rescheduled for a Standard Military Funeral Honors service. The Committee agreed that this change in practice is in the best interest of all families eligible for FMFH and voted unanimously in favor of suggesting this practice be adopted by ANC.

8. **MEETING ADJOURNED.** The Chair then called for any other business. Hearing none, he called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made and seconded. All members voted in favor.

Meeting Adjourned at 1600.

CHET EDWARDS
Co-Chairman

(Date) _____



JAMES PEAKE
Co-Chairman

(Date) _____